

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN

ARTHUR BOTANY,

Plaintiff,

v.

Case No. 12-C-79

CHRISTINE BEERKIRCHER,

Defendant.

MEMORANDUM AND ORDER

Plaintiff lodged a civil rights complaint under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, alleging that his civil rights were violated. Plaintiff is currently incarcerated at the Wisconsin Secure Program Facility in Boscobel.

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1), a prisoner plaintiff is required to pay the statutory filing fee of \$350.00 for a federal lawsuit. If a prisoner does not have the money to pay the filing fee up front, he or she can request leave to proceed *in forma pauperis* in order to pay the fee over time. To proceed with an action *in forma pauperis*, the prisoner must complete a petition and affidavit to proceed *in forma pauperis* and return it to the court with a certified copy of the prisoner's trust account statement showing transactions for the prior six months. The court then assesses and, when funds exist, collects from the plaintiff at the time the action is filed an initial partial filing fee of twenty percent of the average monthly deposits to or the average monthly balance in the prisoner's trust account for the six-month period immediately preceding the filing of the complaint.¹

¹In no event will a prisoner be prohibited from bringing a civil action because he or she has no assets and no means by which to pay the initial partial filing fee. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(4).

In this case, the plaintiff has filed a certified copy of his prison trust account statement for the six-month period immediately preceding the filing of his complaint. He also filed the required affidavit of indigence. Further, he has been assessed and has paid an initial partial filing fee.

Upon review of the trust account statement and affidavit, I am satisfied that plaintiff is unable to pay the statutory filing fee in this case. Leave to proceed *in forma pauperis* therefore will be granted.

Next, the court is required to screen complaints brought by prisoners seeking relief against a governmental entity or officer or employee of a governmental entity. 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(a). The court must dismiss a complaint or portion thereof if the prisoner has raised claims that are legally "frivolous or malicious," that fail to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or that seek monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(b)(1)-(2).

In considering whether a complaint states a claim, courts should follow the principles set forth in *Twombly* by first, "identifying pleadings that, because they are no more than conclusions, are not entitled to the assumption of truth." *Iqbal*, 129 S. Ct. at 1950. Legal conclusions must be supported by factual allegations. *Id.* If there are well-pleaded factual allegations, the court must, second, "assume their veracity and then determine whether they plausibly give rise to an entitlement to relief." *Id.* A claim is legally frivolous when it lacks an arguable basis either in law or in fact. *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25, 31 (1992); *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989). The court may, therefore, dismiss a claim as frivolous where it is based on an indisputably meritless legal theory or where the factual contentions are clearly baseless. *Neitzke*, 490 U.S. at 327.

A complaint, or portion thereof, should be dismissed for failure to state a claim upon which relief may be granted if it appears beyond doubt that the plaintiff can prove no set of facts in support

of the claim or claims that would entitle him to relief. *Hishon v. King & Spalding*, 467 U.S. 69, 73 (1984) (citing *Conley v. Gibson*, 355 U.S. 41, 45-46 (1957)). In reviewing a complaint under this standard, the court must accept as true the allegations of the complaint in question, *Hosp. Bldg. Co. v. Trs. of Rex Hosp.*, 425 U.S. 738, 740 (1976), construe the pleading in the light most favorable to the plaintiff and resolve all doubts in the plaintiff's favor, *Jenkins v. McKeithen*, 395 U.S. 411, 421 (1969).

The court is obliged to give the plaintiff's pro se allegations, however inartfully pleaded, a liberal construction. *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 520-21 (1972).

To state a claim for relief under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, a plaintiff must allege: (1) that he was deprived of a right secured by the Constitution or laws of the United States, and (2) that the deprivation was visited upon him by a person acting under color of state law. *Gomez v. Toledo*, 446 U.S. 635, 640 (1980).

To the extent it is legible, the complaint alleges that the Defendant is part of an unspecified white supremacist conspiracy that operates to thwart inmates' rights to use the inmate complaint review system. Plaintiff asserts that the complaint system is a sham, although the specific examples he provides are vague and difficult to understand.

This complaint will be dismissed. First, due to the difficulty reading Plaintiff's handwriting, it is impossible to discern the actual nature of the complaint Plaintiff raises, which means the complaint violated Fed. R. Civ. P. 8. Second, even if the Defendant is somehow making the ICRS a "sham," that does not state a claim for a violation of the federal Constitution. The rights and procedures provided by the state prison system are matters of state law, and violations of those procedures do not *per se* violate any federal constitutional rights. And if the exhaustion procedures

provided by the state are actually inadequate to provide redress, a plaintiff can still obtain federal review of his claim under § 1983 on the grounds that he followed whatever procedures are available to him. Third, it is assumed that Plaintiff's argument is premised on the one he made in a previous action in which his inmate complaints had been returned to him on the grounds that his handwriting was illegible. (Case No. 10-C-762, Dkt. #33 at 6.) Judge Clevert has also noted that Plaintiff's handwriting is difficult to understand. (*Id.*) If the prison's rejection of his complaints on illegible handwriting grounds is the basis of his current action, the prison was well within its rights to require the Plaintiff to file more legible complaints. In any event, as noted earlier, complaints *about* the inmate complaint system are matters of state, rather than federal, law. Accordingly, the complaint does not state a federal claim.

THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED that plaintiff's request to proceed *in forma pauperis* is granted, meaning that the filing fee may be paid over time.

IT IS ORDERED that the Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Corrections or his designee shall collect from the plaintiff's prison trust account the balance of the filing fee by collecting monthly payments from the plaintiff's prison trust account in an amount equal to twenty percent of the preceding month's income credited to the prisoner's trust account and forwarding payments to the clerk of the court each time the amount in the account exceeds \$10.00 in accordance with 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(2). The payments shall be clearly identified by the case name and number assigned to this action.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that this action is dismissed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B) and 1915A(b)(1) for failure to state a claim upon which relief may be granted.

IT IS ORDERED that the clerk of court document that this inmate has brought an action that was dismissed under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B) and 1915A(b)(1) for failure to state a claim upon which relief may be granted.

IT IS ORDERED that the clerk of court document that this inmate has incurred a "strike" under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g).

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the clerk of court enter judgment accordingly.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that any appeal from this matter would not be taken in good faith pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3) unless the plaintiff offers bonafide arguments supporting his appeal.

Dated this 5th day of April, 2012.

s/ William C. Griesbach
William C. Griesbach
United States District Judge